

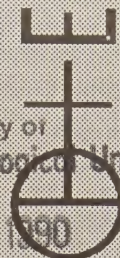
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CHURCHES SEARCH WAYS TO TRIM HEALTH COSTS Interfaith Cooperation Is Key

amed by skyrocketing health care costs, a coalition of church organizations has been meeting over the summer and fall to consider ways to cut them through cooperative efforts.

Representatives from 13 denominations first met in July to discuss a possible pooling of resources at the national, regional and local levels, reports John D. Conway, executive vice president of the UCC Pension Boards.

The proposal under consideration by the denominations is a national cooperative physicians' provider organization (HMO) and/or health maintenance organization (HMO) network.

Clergywomen's Network Decides to Disband

The Network for UCC Clergywomen, founded in 1984 to advocate for the concerns of women clergy in the UCC, is standing...but on a positive note.

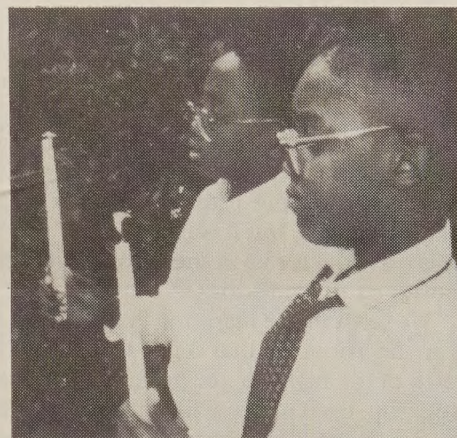
The key to the decision was many participants' view that the UCC "now is focusing upon the issues that caused the network to be formed," explains steering committee member Madelyn Hennessey. The three national bodies of the UCC--the Center for Church Life and Leadership, the Ordinating Center for Women in Church and Society and the UCC Board for Homeland Ministries--are working intensively to remove barriers to clergywomen's advancement, a key network concern, CCW executive director Marilyn Breitling says. "I think that CCW is an instrumentality, she says, it is in a better position "to be an advocate for clergywomen on many issues, including sexual harassment."

Another reason for dismantling, according to Ms. Hennessey, was "difficulty maintaining a voluntary organization." The network will give its materials to UCC and CCW and its funds to CCW's Elizabeth Daniels Skinner Memorial Fund, which supports clergywomen.

A second area of promise, the church health providers feel, is to use their combined purchasing power to obtain discounts from hospitals and physicians. For example, a pooling of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and UCC plan members would benefit the UCC in Texas, while a similar operation would help the Disciples in New England.

Another possibility includes contracting with health centers of excellence specializing in particular procedures.

A committee is expected to recommend "possible areas of cooperation" at the annual meeting in Nov. of the 52-member Church Pensions Conference.



Children in poverty, here remembered in a candlelight vigil, is one of the areas of work the UCC helps fund through its Just Peace Appeal. Suggested date is Jan. 20.

(Photo by Rubin Tendai)

UCC-Disciples Partnership Generates Much Enthusiasm, Less Action

About half the local church clergy responding to a UCC-Disciples partnership study believe that ideally the two denominations should be in full communion, but three-quarters also acknowledge there is little or no contact at the local church level.

That is one of the findings of a survey conducted for the Ecumenical Partnership Committee by the UCC Board for Homeland Ministries that drew 900 responses from UCC and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) pastors.

The leading reason given for little or no contact is no partner church nearby, followed by lack of interest or time, the survey found.

But interest in partnership is "across the board," according to Marjorie Royle, secretary for research and evaluation with UCBHM. "People need to find partners, even if the other's church is not nearby," she notes. "We do it all the time overseas."

Where interaction does occur, pastors report a positive experience, rating it "successful" in most instances. And they'd like to see church interaction increased.

Half the survey forms were sent to churches with a partner in the same county and half to those without. Not surprisingly, interaction was lowest in New England, where there are few Disciples churches, and highest in the West.

The most common partnership activities are clergy meeting together, often at events organized at the conference or regional level, and joint fellowship events with a church or churches of the partner denomination.

Only 21% of partner churches had ever held a joint worship service, however, and even fewer, 15%, had celebrated communion together.

While Disciples pastors tend to think the UCC is more liberal and their UCC counterparts think the Disciples are more conservative, when they get to know each other, the distinctions blur. Both groups, by more than half, feel the two denominations should act together on social issues.

Single copies are free from the Research Office, UCBHM, 475 Riverside Dr., 10 Floor, New York, NY 10115, 212-870-3463.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

AIDS: "It Can't Happen Here"
Is Still a Problem, page 3

UCC Agencies
Speak Out on
Legislation, page 3

Consultant Chosen
For UCC Capital
Campaign, page 3

New Timetable for
Planning Process
Drafts, page 3

There's Room in God's Inn

By Arthur Orth

Two summers ago, we were coming back from the beautiful Canadian Rockies and from a visit with relatives in Hanna, Alberta. Since we were coming into South Dakota from the northwest, we thought that we would spend the night in the Black Hills and attend the Passion Play in Spearfish.

We arrived in Bell Fouché about 2 p.m. and thought that we had plenty of time to find a room for five for the night. What we didn't know was that 60,000 bikers had invaded the Black Hills for their annual gathering at Sturgis. We even called ahead to Spearfish and discovered that everything there for the night was also full, even private homes. The only thing that we could find was a small camper placed under some trees in a sheep pen. We decided immediately to take it.

This was on the 11th of August, a long way from December and Christmas, but it was my father's 79th birthday, and there was no room for us in the inns and motels. We didn't have the power or the authority to buy the comfort we wanted.

We went to the inspiring Passion Play and came back to Bell Fouché about 11 that night and slowly found our way in the dark of the night to our humble abode in the sheep pen. Our son, Jon, tried to see if by imitating the "baaa baaa" of a sheep, he could get a response from them. But they were quiet for the night, respecting our need for rest to prepare us for another day of traveling to Mount Rushmore.

Jesus' birth was even more simple and humble than our

night under the trees in a sheep pen. Our savior created a new example for religious people to follow. He did not identify with the power structures or groups of his time. He did not affirm their values, their lifestyles, their religion or their use of power. Jesus could see through religious politics and knew that in the kingdom of this life and in the new age to come, religious status and power left God unimpressed.

Those who have been touched by Jesus and changed are not expected to be power- and status-seekers of the religious community. They are expected to work for a cleaner and safer environment. They are expected to work for peace at times when the political and military powers insist on increasing weapons systems, armaments and manpower. They are expected to cry out against injustice visited upon the world's vast majority who are poor, hungry and oppressed. They are expected to stand up for those who are systematically abused and excluded merely because of their gender, color, nationality, place of residence or sexual orientation. They are expected to resist religious personalities who create positions for friends and family. They are expected to know that "God stands at every time on this and only on this side: always against the exalted and for the lowly, always against those who already have rights and for those from whom they are robbed and taken away" (Barth).

If there is no room in the inn you want to dwell in this Christmas, remember, there is room for you in the presence of God. Take heart and rejoice this season with the poor, the humble and the meek. There is room in God's inn.

Arthur Orth is minister of Christ Congregational Church, Fort Morgan, CO.

Priorities Report

Evangelism & Membership Growth

United Church of Big Rapids, MI presented new students at nearby Ferris State University with a care package consisting of homemade cookies, information about the church and a coupon for a free taxi ride there on "Friendship Sunday." About 15 students showed up, and a number of them continue to attend worship at the church.

The Homeless Poor

UCC-related Elmhurst (IL) College has a unique way of helping the homeless. As an alternative Christmas gift, students pay \$2 to have a squirrel on campus named after a friend or loved one. An

official "Squirrel Registry Certificate" also is given. Last year, \$600 was raised and donated to a homeless relief agency.

Integrity of Creation, Justice & Peace

Last June, the Hawaii Conference adopted a resolution titled "Recognizing the Right to Self-Governance of Native Hawaiians." It takes a stand for self-governance and self-determination for Native Hawaiians and asks the whole church in Hawaii to act in support of them. Bound up in the concept, conference leaders explain, is native peoples' right to reestablish "a just and proper relationship with the land," allowing them to live out their "interconnectedness with creation."

Education

The United Church of Christ, Elcho, WI, has an innovative Christian education program. When enrollment and attendance at church school on Sunday began declining, pastor Stephen Davis moved it to Thursday afternoon. Classes meet from 3:15 p.m. to 4:40 p.m., and attendance has soared to an average of 15 to 20 children. Important ingredients to the program's success, Mr. Davis believes, are that the church is in a small town and that it is located across the street from a grade school.

Warning: Remember to Reregister Nonprofit

The Conferences of the UCC Insurance Advisory Board reminds churches they must renew their nonprofit corporation status to protect members against lawsuits and to remain tax-exempt.

The nonprofit designation means church's members (but not employees and officials) are exempt from suit against it, but they may lose this protection if the congregation fails to respond to renewal forms routinely sent out by most states. A state could revoke nonprofit status, with the results that individual members would be liable for damages incurred by the church and the congregation would have to pay sales tax. Check your expiration date.

RECOMMENDED

Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway? is a collection of alternative ways to celebrate Christmas, including home services, children's activities and alternative forms of gift-giving. Single copies are \$3 plus shipping, with lower prices for bulk orders. Contact Alternatives, P.O. Box 4299, Ellenwood, GA 30049, 404-961-0102.

Watch for *The Fourth R*, a CBS-TV special Sunday, Dec. 2, on teaching about religion in public schools. Network air time is 11 a.m. (EDT), but check local listings.

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UCC Bodies Speak Out on Legislation

As Congress nears the end of the 1990 session, UCC national bodies still are keeping an eye on certain legislation:

The Office for Church in Society, Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society, and Commission for Racial Justice support ratification of the *U.N. Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*. Get resource packet for \$10 from United Church Resources, 800-325-7061, or call 216-736-2174 for general information.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act seeks to restore religious liberties taken away by the recent Supreme Court decision on when freedom of religious expression gives way to state laws. UCC president Paul Sherry and OCIS back the bill. Contact OCIS at 202-543-1517.

The Church Benefits Simplification Act, supported by The Pension Boards, would protect churches from Congressional changes in rules that apply to retirement plans. Call 212-870-2877.

The Postal Reform Act of 1990, opposed by the Office of Communication, would raise the cost of second- and third-class mail. Call 216-736-2222.

CRJ opposes the *"Motor Voter Bill,"* feeling that allowing people to register to vote when receiving or renewing drivers licenses ignores a class of people who can't afford a car. Call 216-736-2161.

Some bills could be acted on this year and others reintroduced in 1991.

Firm Tapped to Aid Capital Campaign

New York City-based Community Counselling Service was selected over three other firms by an Executive Council-appointed committee to help organize a major capital gifts campaign for the UCC.

The \$30-million three-year campaign, starting in 1992, was voted by General Synod 17, which has designated two-thirds of the proceeds to national bodies and one-third to conferences.

The contributions will be used for projects in three general areas: community, clergy and congregation, according to a General Synod vote. Among projected programs for funding are domestic and overseas missions projects, loans to seminarians and aid to American Indian churches.

CCS has led similar campaigns for the American Baptists and Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and now is helping the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

A full plan will go to General Synod 18.

AIDS Audit Has Mixed Results

Many UCC bodies and institutions have made attempts to respond to AIDS workplace issues, but the attitude "it can't happen here" still is encountered frequently.

These were among findings of an audit on HIV/AIDS policies and practices in the UCC conducted by UC Board for Homeland Ministries in response to a Synod resolution. Participants included 8 instrumentalities, 24 conferences, 46 health and human service agencies and corporations, and 24 schools, colleges and seminaries.

More than half the organizations reporting said they have inquired about regulations concerning HIV/AIDS; 41% have made policy changes to comply, and more than 25% have written policies pertaining to AIDS, with others "in progress."

But about a quarter of the groups stated that such policies are not applicable to their employees or the work they do. One possible reason: HIV/AIDS has thus far touched few UCC organizations directly, with only about 10% reporting applicants, workers, their family members or clients living with the disease.

Ignored in this attitude, warns Bill Johnson, the Homeland Board's secretary for AIDS programs and ministries coordination, is the rate at which the pandemic is spreading among the population at large. It also misses people who already are hurting and need special ministries because a friend or relative has HIV/AIDS, he notes, pointing out that even an aging person in a nursing home can be affected if a family member has the disease.

A positive finding in the survey was the prevalence of HIV/AIDS coverage in UCC employees' health insurance plans. Both the plan provided by the UCC Pension

Growing Churches: Not All Things to All People

Growing churches target their programs to specific groups rather than trying to be all things to all people, a report released this past Sept. revealed.

Successful Churches: What They Have in Common also found that growing congregations "refused to be enticed into areas of ministry in which they discerned no special calling, preferring to do what they were called to do."

Such churches do not concentrate on numerical growth but experience it as a byproduct of successful programs, emphasized the Barna Research Group, which conducted the survey. "Numerical growth is a consequence of their efforts," the 47-page study says, "not the focus of it."

For a copy, send \$24 to Barna Research Group, 722 W. Broadway, Glendale, CA 91204, 818-241-9684.

KYP Moves to Cleveland

Keeping You Posted's editorial offices are moving to Cleveland following this issue of the newsletter, and a new editor soon will be chosen.

Martha R. Gotwals, editor for 11 of **KYP's** 25 years, will leave the UCC Office of Communication, which publishes the newsletter, at the end of the year. She is remaining in New York City for family reasons.

New address to send news, photos, "Priorities Report" and "UC Scene" items, and "Opposing Views" is **KYP**, UCC Office of Communication, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115.

Boards and most of the others offered continue health insurance coverage after disability with HIV/AIDS. Two-thirds of the groups also permit persons with HIV/AIDS to draw upon pension benefits when disabled.

The Puerto Rico Conference and UCC institutions there were cited in the report for outstanding ministries to persons living with HIV/AIDS.

At press time, the Executive Council was looking at recommendations for the UCC from its HIV/AIDS Ministry Working Group based on the audit's findings.

UCC Planning Process Drafters Hold 1st Meeting

Seeking renewed vitality for the UCC, 125 church leaders from across the country met near Cleveland Oct. 5-7 to draft directional statements for nine crucial areas of the church's life.

The meeting was the opening step in *Toward the 21st Century: A System-Wide Planning Process* for the UCC. The participants were divided into teams to draft two-page issue papers on the issues outlined in the planning process (see July-Aug. **KYP**).

A new timetable calls for the issue papers to be mailed on Jan. 1 to churches and UCC bodies for comment. UCC national and conference program personnel will wrestle with the drafts Jan. 18-20 at an all-staff meeting in St. Louis.

Teams will reconvene Feb. 1-3 to assess comments and make revisions. In Apr., the entire church will receive second drafts that will go before General Synod 18 for consideration. UCC president Paul H. Sherry sees this work as the start of a process that could last 10 years.

News Briefs

Church World Service Helps Persian Gulf Refugees

As of press time, Church World Service had sent some \$60,000 (in funds and medicines) plus 27,500 blankets to aid the hundreds of thousands of refugees created by the Persian Gulf Crisis. The Middle East Council of Churches is administering the aid. To participate in the relief effort, UCC members should send checks made out to UC Board for World Ministries and earmarked "Persian Gulf Crisis" to UCBWM, Middle East Office, 475 Riverside Dr., 16 Floor, New York, NY 10115, 212-870-2835.

Leading Ecumenical Peace & Justice Groups to Merge

Two well-known religious advocacy groups--Interfaith Action for Economic Justice and National IMPACT--are merging to more effectively work for justice and peace and against hunger and poverty. The new group, INTERFAITH IMPACT, will bring together more than 35 national, 23 state and many local interfaith groups. The UCC's Arthur B. Keys, Jr., Interfaith Action's executive director, and Gretchen Cassell Eick, National IMPACT's executive director, will be co-directors of INTERFAITH IMPACT.

New Conflict Resolution Resource Available

To help churches learn about ways to handle conflict constructively, Charles McCollough of the UCC Office for Church in Society has written a pamphlet containing a six-hour introductory course on "Conflict Resolution for a Just Peace Church." The booklet is available for \$1.50 (includes postage and handling) from OCIS, 110 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002, 202-543-1517.

UCC Animal Creation Group Forms

Concern for the rights and protection of animals has led UCC members to form UCC Christian Responsibility Toward Animals (UCC-CRTA)--a grassroots advocacy network. Contact UCC-CRTA at P.O. Box 1335, North Wales, PA 19454, 215-699-6067.

WARC Elects First Woman President

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, of which the UCC is part, has elected Jane Dempsey Douglas as its first woman president. Dr. Douglas is a professor of historical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. She replaces South African anti-apartheid leader Allen Boesak.

Proctor & Gamble Files Libel Suit

The Proctor & Gamble Company has filed a libel suit against James and Linda Newton of Parsons, KS, because, the company says, the couple "perpetrated the phony rumor" P&G supports satanism and it discussed that support on a TV talk show. In the 1980's, P&G won lawsuits against 12 individuals who spread the bogus rumor. The Newtons, as well as some of the others whom P&G has sued, are independent Amway distributors. Some Amway products compete with P&G.



1990 Christmas Fund poster shows minister-brothers Theodore (L) and Carl Rasche with Carl's wife, teacher Ruth Elizabeth. Suggested for Dec. 23, the offering aids retired ministers in need and gives emergency help to retired and active clergy. (Poster subjects are not fund recipients.) (Photo by Robert J. Westrich)

4 KEEPING YOU POSTED NOV.-DEC. 1990

UPCOMING EVENTS

Contact UCC Council for Health and Human Service Ministries at 1905 Old Homestead La., Lancaster, PA 17601, 800-822-4476, about **Health and Welfare Sunday**, to be celebrated Dec. 2.

Human Rights Day and Week will be observed Dec. 10-16. Contact National Council of Churches' Human Rights Office, 475 Riverside Dr., Rm. 634, New York, NY 10115, 212-870-2424.

Celebrate '90-'91 National Ecumenical Gathering of Student Christian Conferences will be held Dec. 28-Jan. 1 in Louisville, KY. Contact Verlyn Barker by Nov. 30 at UC Board for Homeland Ministries, 475 Riverside Dr., 10 Floor, New York, NY 10115, 212-870-3449.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Kansas-Oklahoma Conference is looking for **CONFERENCE MINISTER**. Apply by Dec. 31 to Edith Guffey, search committee chair, at 3013 W. 29 St., Lawrence, KS 66047, 913-864-5409.

Ohio Conference's Eastern Ohio Association seeks **ASSOCIATE ASSOCIATION MINISTER**, to be based in Canton. Apply by Dec. 31 to Sandra Hutchinson, search committee chair, at 2560 Clearview Ave., NW, Canton, OH 44718.

UC Scene

Vermont UCC churches **WATERVILLE UNION** and Montpelier's **OLD BRICK CHURCH** and **OLD MEETING HOUSE** have "adopted" a social worker, calling weekly to find out what they can do. They have given child clients birthday cards, Easter baskets, a prom dress and duffle bags for frequent moves. The program has helped churches understand human need the social worker is up against and lifted social workers' morale.

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